



September 15, 2008

Dear Business Owner and Manager:

At their meeting on August 12, 2008 the City Council went on record supporting the elimination of foam and solid polystyrene food service ware; encouraging all restaurants and take out food vendors to switch to reusable, biodegradable and recyclable materials. At the October 14th meeting, the City Council will consider a Sustainable Food Service Ware Ordinance that would make these prohibitions mandatory—though it would not take effect for at least six months. In preparation for that meeting, staff is sending this letter out to all impacted businesses to explain the proposed ordinance and announce a public forum where detailed questions may be asked.

Polystyrene is one of the most commonly encountered items that litter our streets, sidewalks, parks, creeks, storm drains and the Bay. Unlike paper-based products, polystyrene does not decompose once it becomes litter. Instead it breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, commonly ingested by wildlife. When ingested by an animal, the result is reduced appetite, reduced nutrient absorption and starvation. Moreover, there is evidence that benzene and styrene—toxic chemicals that are partially comprise polystyrene—may leach from containers. For these reasons, the City Council is urging, and will soon require through ordinance, a transition to alternative biodegradable and recyclable food service ware.

As currently written, the Sustainable Food Service Ware Ordinance would prohibit food service vendors from using foam or solid polystyrene disposable food service ware. The ordinance also states that all food service ware will be required to be biodegradable, reusable or recyclable unless the food vendor can show that there is no available alternative for a specific application. The ordinance applies to such establishments as restaurants, grocery store delis, hotels, bars, coffee shops, cafes, mobile food vendors as well as city departments and facilities. Food service ware items include all containers, bowls, plates, trays, cartons, cups, lids, straws, utensils and similar items with the resin identification code #6 on the bottom.

If adopted, the ordinance would ban the use of all foam polystyrene (commonly called Styrofoam®) within six months. This includes white or colored clamshell type containers, plates, cups and bowls. Six months after that, use of solid polystyrene will also be prohibited. Solid polystyrene typically includes clear clamshell containers, straws, lids and utensils. Acceptable items include recyclable materials such as paper,

aluminum and plastic with resin identification #'s 1, 2, 4 and 5; as well as biodegradable products made from corn, potatoes, sugar cane waste and other agricultural products.

Once the ordinance is adopted, City staff will work closely with affected businesses to provide supportive services such as information on acceptable alternatives, distributors and suppliers as well as a sounding board for questions about the ordinance itself. **We strongly encourage you to attend the public information forum on Thursday, October 2 at 10:00 a.m. at City Hall, Conference Room 115, 567 El Camino Real to ask questions and provide feedback on the draft ordinance.**

Also included is a brief overview of the ordinance and a listing of Sustainable Food Service Ware products. For more information, please contact the Public Works Department at (650) 616-7046 and check out the entire ordinance online at www.sanbruno.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Steven Davis
Acting Public Works Director